

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION REQUEST

The following constitutes an application for preliminary consideration for the nomination potential of a property to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This does not mean that a property is being nominated to the registers at this time. Rather it is being evaluated to determine if it qualifies for such listings. Applicants will be notified of the board's actions in writing shortly after the meeting.

Please **type** and use 8-1/2" X 11" paper if additional space is needed.

All submitted materials become the property of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and cannot be returned.

1. HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY (if historic name is not known, use current name of area)

Colonial Place

2. LOCATION

A. Street or Route Colonial Avenue, Newport Avenue, Gosnold Avenue, Mayflower Road, Michigan Avenue, Georgia Avenue, Carolina Avenue, Virginia Avenue, Maryland Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Delaware Avenue, New Jersey Avenue, New York Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Rhode Island Avenue, Massachusetts Avenue, New Hampshire Avenue.

B. County or City Norfolk, Virginia

3. LEGAL OWNER/S OF PROPERTIES. Include names and addresses of all property owners in district. Attach additional sheets if necessary. (See Attached)

Name:

Address:

PIF--Colonial Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

City/State: _____ ZIP

4. GENERAL DATA

A. Date or dates of selected buildings: Early 20th century

B. Approximate acreage: 166 acres

C. Architects or carpenter/masons (if known): Charles C. Fitch; S. L. McGonigle

D. Primary Use of Buildings: Residential; Single-family, Multiple-family

5. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Located on the south side of the northern branch of the Lafayette River in an enclave of residential neighborhoods, Colonial Place is bounded on the east by Cruser Place and Riverview, on the south by Virginia Place and on the west by Ghland Park. Platted on a peninsula jutting into the river, the area was historically bounded on the south by the southern side of 38th Street, and on the north, east and western edges by the semi-circular Mayflower Road that formed the edges of the subdivision. Though originally platted to include the southern side of 38th Street, this area is visually separated from Colonial Place and has historically been and is currently considered to be part of the Virginia Place neighborhood to its south. Therefore, the southern boundary for the proposed historic district is drawn through 38th Street, including only the northern part of the street.

The Colonial Place neighborhood is made up primarily of detached, single-family dwellings, interspersed with an occasional apartment house. The area is platted as a grid system with a semi-circular road forming the outer edge on the north end; three principal roads extend from north to south, while a series of thirteen crossroads run from east to west. The grid is punctuated by circles and squares at the intersection of the streets to slow traffic and break the visual monotony of the grid.

The northern, outer edge of the proposed district faces the Lafayette River and offers exceptional views and a bucolic setting. The houses along this semi-circular edge are substantial in size and are set well back from the road with large yards in front. The interior of the subdivision includes a

variety of house forms and sizes, ranging from large 2-1/2-story brick dwellings to smaller, bungalow-type frame residences. In general, the larger houses are set upon larger lots and are well-spaced from each other, while the smaller houses are set upon narrow lots and separated by narrow alleys or driveways. The landscaping features are limited to shade trees in the individual yards on the cross streets, while the larger, north-south axes, such as Newport Avenue enjoy a tree-lined streetscape.

The chronological development is visible in terms of the area architecture which includes houses ranging in date from the first decade of the 20th century to the infill buildings of the 1980s.

Despite the wide range of building dates, the area is generally defined by its eclectic collection of Colonial Revival style houses, ranging from the Georgian Revival American four-square-type house, to the Spanish Mission-revival style house.

Individual houses of particular note include the earliest and largest houses that were individually designed and built by Norfolk's rising upperclass. The Dillard House (122-113) built in 1906 and located at 4105 Newport Avenue at the intersection of Carolina Avenue, was the first house built in Colonial Place. The 2-1/2-story brick house, designed in a transitional Queen Anne/Classical Revival style, was built by George W. Dillard, president of the Sterling Place Corporation, developers of Colonial Place. Located near the southern edge of the development with the Colonial Place gateway to its south and the streetcar line running directly in front of it, the house was built as a sort of enticement for other, wealthy Norfolk residents to follow.

The Claude Herbert House (122-89), located at 536 New York Avenue, was built immediately thereafter in 1907 by C.E. Herbert, a prosperous Norfolk wholesale grocer who was a former vice-mayor of the city. Herbert lived in the large, two-story frame house, designed in an elegant Colonial Revival style until his death in 1945 at which time the house was sold out of his family. An historic photograph of the Herbert House indicates that it was, in the first decade of the century, surrounded by vast, open lands, at that time still undeveloped.

The Peatross House at 4415 Newport Avenue is a two-story, Dutch Colonial-style house built in 1908 for Richard Peatross, treasurer of the Colonial Place Corporation. Like George W. Dillard, Richard Peatross built the house for himself and his family in an effort to encourage others of his social stature to join him and make Colonial Place the "high class" suburb which it

was touted as.

Two other early houses constructed in the then-sparsely built Colonial Place include the Wilson House at 504 Georgia Avenue, and the Manning House at 4801 Newport Avenue. Built in 1910, the Wilson House is a transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style house built by George T. Wilson, Norfolk's Chief of Police. The Manning House, built by Dr. John Manning and his wife, is similarly a transitional-style structure. Both of these substantial, well-built frame houses with their projecting window bays, front porches and hipped roofs with dormers and chimneys are typical of the early, middle to upper-middle-class housing in Colonial Place.

The construction of these substantial houses did not necessarily encourage the "high-class" development desired by the original promoters of Colonial Place. Unlike the custom-designed and built houses of the early years, the architecture of the second half of the twentieth century was speculative in nature. The speculative house form in Colonial Place is typically defined by its moderate size, and well-built structure. Several blocks of houses representing this speculative development can be found throughout the neighborhood such as on Newport Avenue, between New York Avenue and Connecticut Avenue; on Colonial Avenue, between New Jersey and New York Avenues; on Delaware Avenue, at Gosnold Avenue; and Newport Avenue at Carolina Avenue. The block of houses on Newport Avenue, south of New York Avenue, provides a good sampling of the typical 1920-1930 house type in the subdivision. This street consists of a group of speculative, detached, houses having similar forms, but a varying use of details to break the repetition. Most notably, for instance, the roof forms of each house alternates from a steeply pitched gable with a shed roof dormer to a dutch gambrel, while the porches of each alternate from squat, tapered wood columns on brick bases to full-length columns.

The house at 4210 Newport Avenue (122-90) provides a good representative example of the type of speculative house that is found throughout Colonial Place. This house is of frame construction and has an American-four-square form complete with a hipped roof and front porch.

The use of craftsman detailing is prevalent in the neighborhood. A row of houses on Delaware Avenue at the corner of Delaware and Gosnold provides a good example of this--here, hipped roofs with hipped roof dormers have exposed rafter ends, and hipped roof front porches are set upon squat, tapered columns. In addition,

multi-paned upper sash over single-paned lower sash are grouped in pairs, a typical craftsman detailing.

In addition to the typical American Colonial Revival style houses, several eclectic revival houses are found in the neighborhood, including some Tudor Revival style and Spanish Mission Revival style houses. The house at 433 Rhode Island Avenue and a house at the tip of Mayflower Road are both designed in a Spanish Revival style. The house at 433 Rhode Island Avenue features a corner tower with narrow, arched openings and an open loggia with wide arched openings next to it.

Tudor Revival style houses are seen at 4901 Gosnold Avenue, on the block of Mayflower Road between Newport and Colonial Avenues, and at the corner of Mayflower Road and New Jersey Avenue. This style house, however, tends to represent the later, ca. 1940 development phase in the neighborhood.

The development of Colonial Place began slowly in the first decade of this century with the development of individually designed and built houses meant to appeal to the upperclasses and continued with the speculative house in the 1920s and 1930s. Although by 1950, only a few unbuilt lots remained, some replacement and infill development occurred during the latter half of the 20th century. A row of low-lying 1960s ranch houses is found along Mayflower Road between New Jersey and Connecticut Avenues, while more recent, ca. 1980s housing is located on the south side of Rhode Island Avenue. Although groups of infill and replacement architecture such as those listed above do not generally deviate, in terms of size and scale, from the earlier residential architecture of Colonial Place and are located within the original boundaries of the planned community, they do not contribute to the historical and architectural significance of the site and should, therefore, be considered non-contributing resources within the historic district.

6. HISTORY

Originally the site of a 166-acre farm, Colonial Place was platted as a residential subdivision in 1904 as one of the many streetcar suburbs that began to develop in the northern section of the City of Norfolk. Although conceived as a "high-class" neighborhood, the planned development was slow to emerge as such, and was eventually built with moderate-sized residences that appealed to the solidly middle-class. Colonial Place survived the civic and racial unrest that plagued this area of Norfolk in the 1960s and today survives as a racially well-integrated neighborhood.

One of the many streetcar suburbs that emerged in the early 20th century in Norfolk, Colonial Place was conceived in 1903 when the founding development company, Sterling Place Company, was chartered on March 28 of that year. In May of 1903, the Sterling Place Company bought a farm from the heirs of Peter Marsh for \$150,000 with the intention of developing it into a "high class" residential section of Norfolk. The Marsh Estate was located north of the suburban development of Park Place and included the only large growth of hardwoods near Norfolk as well as a marshy peninsula of land that jutted into Tanner's Creek. Because the land was only a few feet above high tide, much filling was required as was the construction of an embankment around the outer edge of the peninsula.

In 1904, the street plan for Colonial Place was adopted. Like the subdivisions south of the March site such as Park Place, Virginia Place, and Kensington, Colonial Place was laid out in a grid pattern with streets running perpendicular and parallel to one another. However, instead of continuing the monotonous grid of these subdivisions into Colonial Place, the north-south streets of Colonial Place were angled to follow the axis of the center of the peninsula and culminated with a semi-circular road delineating the northern and water's edge of the development. In addition, two squares and two circles crossing the principal arteries were superimposed upon the grid, adding further visual intrigue.¹ As a result of this decision to skew the principal street axis from the subdivisions south of Colonial Place and to create squares and circles within the grid, the three blocks abutting the southern edge of the development at Pocohontas

¹ The circle at Rhode Island Avenue and Newport Avenue, at the far northern end of the subdivision, also served as a streetcar turn-around for streetcars which had reached the end of their run from downtown Norfolk.

Avenue (later 38th Street) became odd-shaped and difficult to build on. In addition, the four blocks of land owned by the Sterling Development Company on the south side of 38th Street were no longer visually connected to the development. Indeed, historically and today, these four blocks of land lying south of 38th Street, were and are not considered to be part of Colonial Place, despite their inclusion on the original plat maps.

By the end of 1906, the Sterling Company began the sale of its lots, and the first few houses in the suburb began to emerge. That same year and also the year of the Jamestown Exposition, Sterling Place changed its name to the Colonial Place Corporation and gave the streets colonial names. The company was reorganized in 1908 as such and the development of the subdivision began in earnest and with great intentions. Colonial Place was originally intended as a "high class" residential section of Norfolk and was meant to appeal to the upperclasses. Advertisements for the new subdivision touted the area's restrictions,

Along Mayflower Road, which it is proposed to terrace and bulkhead--only one house to a site of 110 feet; along Gosnold Avenue, only two houses to 220 feet, and all houses to set back 10 feet from the building line. No liquor. No person of African descent.

And at the same time, associated Colonial Place to Norfolk's best existing residential community, Ghent:

The paving of Colonial, Pocahontas, Massachusetts and Gosnold Avenues from Mowbray Arch in Ghent, through Colonial Place to Lafayette River connects the best residential sections of the city and affords a beautiful driveway.²

In addition, the development was launched as a bucolic area, with water activities, yet only 15 minutes from downtown by way of streetcar. By 1911, the streetcars ran through the center of the development, ending their run at the northern end of Colonial Place.

Following the area's initial stage of development, the physical, social and cultural growth of the suburb took place in a series of phases that continued into the 1960s. By the mid-20th

² Advertisement for Colonial Place, The Virginian Pilot, April 2, 1911. The extension of Colonial Avenue from Ghent north to Colonial Place and the platting of the subdivision with its semi-circular Mayflower Road at the northern border of Colonial Place were clearly deliberate efforts on the part of the original developers to associate Colonial Place with Ghent.

century, however, Colonial Place was a solidly middle-class community like its neighbors.

The first phase of Colonial Place development took place in 1906 with the building of the first house by the President of the Sterling Place Corporation, George W. Dillard. The Dillard House, visible from the gateway leading into the development at its southern end, is a large and imposing building set upon a narrow, urban-like lot. Despite the Dillard House's urban quality, the typical house type to follow in its place was more suburban: free-standing dwellings displaying a variety of Revival styles and set on large lots with front and side yards predominate.

During these first years, development was undeniably slow. Norfolk's building boom of 1906-1907 declined into a 1909-1910 slump. In 1911, only 12 houses had been built in the area. A 1911 advertisement for Colonial Place in the Virginian Pilot, showed images of "some Colonial Place houses" which were in fact, all twelve of them. And while Colonial Place continued to promote itself as a "high class" suburb, other subdivisions such as Larchmont offered greater "high class" amenities, including a 15-foot as opposed to a 10-foot building setback and the requirement that building plans had to be reviewed by the Board of Directors of the Larchmont Company. A wide-range of solidly middle-class developments without these restrictions, such as Winona, Riverview, Park Place and others, left Colonial Place in between the upper and middle class markets.

By 1912, the Colonial Place Corporation gave in; building requirements limiting the construction of one house per two lots was abandoned. This change quickly encouraged the development of modest-sized three- and four-bedroom houses that appealed to the middle-income buyer. Within a decade of this change, the original builders of the large houses in Colonial Place left it for West Ghent and Larchmont.

Once Colonial Place shed its pretensions of appealing to the upper crust, a speculative building boom took place that continued until the beginning of the Depression. The speculative development of Colonial Place generally involved the development of one or two houses, which when sold, provided the capital for more, similar development. One of the first speculative builders in the area was Charles C. Fitch, who built a number of substantial, well-built houses between 1912 and 1918. All of these houses, which sold for between \$3,000 and \$5,500, were of varying shapes and styles. Another speculative builder, S.L.

McGonigle, built one of the most distinguished blocks of the subdivision--the 500 block of Pennsylvania Avenue. Here, he built thirteen subtle variations of the same brick house. Following World War I, hundreds of less substantial, two-story, frame dwellings were built in Colonial Place to house the growing population of naval officers, skilled workers, professionals in the shipbuilding industry, the railroad industry and the like. In addition, JEB Stuart Elementary School, between Virginia and Carolina Avenues, was built and opened in 1920 to serve the growing residential community.

After the end of the War, but before the onset of the Depression, the development of Colonial Place continued at a slower pace, as the availability of lots diminished. At this time the physical development of the area was virtually complete as single remaining lots were built upon by an owner or in small groups by the speculative builder. A few houses on Mayflower Road facing the river were built in an imposing Colonial Revival style, and Gosnold Avenue began to be constructed with similarly large-sized houses that the original developers had hoped would characterize the entire subdivision. At the same time that these single-family dwellings of note were being constructed, however, the multiple-family apartment building made its appearance in the neighborhood. After 1921, six apartments were built in central Colonial Place.³ After the Depression and by the mid-1950s, only a few lots remained undeveloped in the Colonial Place neighborhood.

From its inception, Colonial Place was a strictly white neighborhood in which African Americans were specifically excluded. Colonial Place retained its all-white status until 1967. Previously, the edge of the black community--Park Place--had been 35th Street. In 1966, black families broke this social barrier and moved into Colonial Place in the ensuing years. Integration in the area and the development of modest houses targeted directly at upwardly mobile blacks⁴ proceeded quickly. By 1970, nearly 20 percent of the Colonial Place population was African American. Unlike other suburban communities where white flight succeeded the entry of blacks, Colonial Place continued to attract white buyers in the 1960s. In 1968, a stabilization committee was organized in Colonial Place that publicly stated

³ In 1969 zoning laws excluded multi-family dwellings from Colonial Place.

⁴ Although not overtly advertized for blacks, these houses entered the market at high prices given their cheap construction, and were therefore rejected by whites who had alternative options. Blacks wishing to leave the inner city for suburbia, did not have the privilege of choice, and were compelled to pay more for less.

PIF--Colonial Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

integration--as the alternative to total change or white supremacy--as its goal and set about to attack the real neighborhood problems--physical deterioration, attitudes of integration, and more. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 gave the committee power with which to oppose red lining by the real estate community and to move forward in their efforts to improve the physical character of the neighborhood.

In 1973, the Colonial Place-Riverview conservation district was established and approved by City Council and the General Development Plan for Colonial Place-Riverview was put into effect. Today, Colonial Place survives as a suburban subdivision that grew and adapted to the changing physical, social and cultural environment from its inception in 1904 to the present.

7. PHOTOGRAPHS

Black and white photographs and color slides of general views and streetscapes must be provided. Photographs of important buildings in district would also be helpful. The inclusion of photographs is essential to the completion of this application. Without photographs, this application can not be considered.

8. MAP

Please include a map showing the location of the proposed district. A sketch map is acceptable but please not street route numbers, addresses, buildings, prominent geographic features, etc. Please include a "north" arrow. This form can not be processed without a map showing the property's exact location.

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10: APPLICANT INFORMATION

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE:

ADDRESS:
CITY/STATE:

SIGNATURE

DATE:

PIF--Colonial Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

PROPERTY NAME: Colonial Place

**PLEASE SUPPLY THE FOLLOWING NAMES AND ADDRESSES AS APPLICABLE.
THIS INFORMATION MUST BE PROVIDED BEFORE YOUR PIF CAN BE
CONSIDERED BY THE STATE REVIEW BOARD:**

Mayor: Paul D. Fraim
1109 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

City Manager:
James B. Oliver, Jr.
1101 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

Director, Planning Division

John M. Dugan, Director
Dept. of City Planning and Codes Administration
508 City Hall Building

Chairman, Planning Commission

Dr. William L. Craig, Jr.
451 Lee Point Road
Norfolk, VA

Executive Director

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Arthur L. Collins
723 Woodlake Drive
Chesapeake, Virginia 23320

City Council member or Supervisor in whose district the property
is located:

Paul D. Fraim
Dr. Mason C. Andrews

PIF--Colonial Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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"Historical Houses and Horticultural Hints," Colonial Place/Riverview Calendar, 1989.

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Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of the City of Norfolk and Vicinity including the City of Portsmouth, 1889.

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Paschang, Chet. "Luxury Apartment Project In Colonial Place Sought." The Portsmouth Star, October 23, 1959.

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